

Membership Recruitment: An Ongoing Journey

By Brunetta Sarpong



People will join organizations that serve a great cause in an effective and efficient manner. From our perspective, there is no greater cause than our children. However, with so many different activities, issues, and concerns competing for people's attention each day, the purpose and goal of every PTA and PTSA membership must be clear, understandable, and practical to convert interested individuals into members.

Membership recruitment

Recruitment requires a customized, flexible, and dynamic approach to reach the varied members of a school community; what works for one person may not work for the next. The goal is to make contact and then form a connection with parents. Of course, that connection happens more easily with those who attend the PTA/PTSA meetings regularly, but what about those who do not attend these meetings? You have to go where the people are to share the message of PTA.

At Murrah High School PTSA in Jackson, Mississippi, we have always successfully recruited members among parents who believe that the PTSA is the best vehicle by which to be active in their children's education. To build our numbers, we sought the full membership of the administration, teachers, and staff. We wanted to be in a position to say to parents that school personnel were on board 100 percent even though some did not have students currently attending the school. Through our "Each One, Reach One" campaign, we asked our current members to recruit another parent or community supporter for membership. Requests for membership sponsors were made to assist those individuals who wanted to join, but were not financially able to at

the time. We recruited student members by inviting them to Valentine's Day and post-spring-break parties; students need an incentive to join PTSA, and having some fun is a great incentive for them.

A membership thermometer was placed at the front of the school where everyone could be reminded of the membership goal and keep up with our progress. Our membership forms were readily accessible through the school and PTSA websites, e-mails, and newsletter, and at the Parent Resource Center and school library. We made "shout outs" through the announcer at school football games to encourage PTSA membership, and we asked to be placed on the agenda of school booster clubs to inform parents about PTA and membership.

We were always ready with our receipt books and membership cards to sign-up new members. We also had the National PTA sample membership survey converted to an online survey for our membership to provide feedback for improvements and suggestions.

Results

Our 2010–2011 membership reached more than 700 members. We received recognition from Mississippi PTA not only for having the largest high school PTSA membership, but also for having the largest PTA/PTSA in the state. We received the President Award Gold Level for increasing our membership by 323 members over the past year and we became a member of the 700 Club. We are very proud of our accomplishment and received positive feedback regarding the PTSA and our increased membership communication efforts. Our new PTSA membership goal is 1,000 members.



The PTSA membership volunteers are ready for the students and parents to arrive at Murrah to pick up class schedules. Seated at the membership table are (l-r): Mary Williams, VP publicity; Jennifer Hughes, VP programs; Brunetta Sarpong, VP membership; and Samuel Sarpong, student member.

Lessons learned

Determination, persistence, and enthusiasm are required to get people excited about membership. Recruitment is really an ongoing effort, reminding parents, teachers and students of the benefits of an active and effective PTSA in our schools. It takes volunteers from all areas—parents, teachers, students, community supporters, and alumni—to work effectively and beneficially for our children.

Support from the school principal and administrative staff is crucial. Goals are accomplished more easily when the administration and PTSA are on the same page, and the journey is more enjoyable when you have a great group of leaders serving on the PTSA board.

Utilizing National PTA membership resources is helpful. The *PTA Membership Quick-Reference Guide* really helped in addressing parents who gave reasons why they could not join the PTSA. In addition, National PTA's online templates, such as "New Year... New Opportunities," make it easier to renew the membership campaign in January.

The membership chairperson needs an understudy—a person who is willing to assume the leadership role for the next year. Continuity is also necessary; the past chair should remain available for support, encouragement, and advice.

Membership in the PTA/PTSA provides a resounding voice of support for our children, our schools, and the educational system of this country. Let us remember that and continue to recruit others to join PTA.

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Valentine's Day Party publicity sign made by the Murrah cheerleaders for the PTSA.



Membership Awards received at the Mississippi PTA Convention in Gulfport on April 8-9, 2011.



Find out more

The *PTA Membership Quick-Reference Guide* is available online at PTA.org/Local_Leaders/QRG2011_MembershipGuide.pdf. Be sure to have your membership card handy—this guide is available only to PTA members. Local Leadership Resources: January Membership Campaign information is available at PTA.org/1453.htm.

Membership recruitment strategies

- Seek full membership from faculty and staff.
- Recruit membership sponsors for those who cannot afford membership.
- Give students a fun incentive to join PTSA.
- Prepare an "understudy" to the membership chair so that person can serve in the chairperson's role the following year. Continuity is important.